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Coteaching in an Inclusion Setting: Perceptions of Third- Through Eighth-Grade Educators

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Co-teaching in an Inclusion Setting: Perceptions of Third-Through Eighth Grade Educators

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Background Information

- Suburban school district in Southeastern Georgia
- Survey questions adapted from the Colorado Assessment of Coteaching (CO-ACT)
- Visible insufficiencies in their understanding about what constitutes best models or practices



Background Information

- Frustration regarding a lack of knowledge about inclusion practices
- Lack of necessary training to better equip individuals to work in coteaching settings
- Perceived lack of collaboration between coteachers





Purpose of the Study

To develop a foundational understanding of coteachers' views about current attributes of coteaching, as well as best practices, to facilitate an understanding for the maintenance and improvement of the coteaching provided in third through eighth grade classrooms in the state.



Research Questions

- What are the views and perceptions of coteachers at the research site regarding the general concepts of inclusion and the specific inclusionary model of coteaching?
- How do coteachers perceive their own level of comfort and their own ability to deliver instruction using the district's advocated strategies for coteaching?



Research Questions

- How do coteachers perceive the level of impact of their coteaching practices on their students' performance in language arts and reading?
- What do coteachers perceive as influencing or shaping their delivery of instruction in the classroom?
- What resources and professional assistance do coteachers think are necessary to help improve their deliver of instruction?



Research Design

- Mixed-method, descriptive study using both quantitative and qualitative data
- The “central premise was that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell, 2004).



Research Design

- Mixed-methods research considers perceptions of phenomenon through experience, which is the primary source of knowledge (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
- With interviews and open-ended questioning, the researcher is able to explore perceptions and lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon.



Participants

Gender

Male	6
Female	20

Age

Under 36	13
36 to 45	8
46 or older	5



Participants

Educational level

Bachelor's	3
Bachelor's + 30	9
Master's	13
Master's + 30	1

Years of teaching

0 to 5	1
5 to 10	6
10 to 15	7
15 to 20	5
20 to 25	2
25 to 30	5

Current level of teaching

Elementary	14
Middle	12

Special needs courses taken

Two or less	12
Three or more	14



Data Collection Tools

- CO-ACT Survey
- Survey included a Likert scale
- Interviews: Conducted one on one interviews to establish a better relationship with each participant.
- Open ended questions

Interview Questions





Results

- **Question 1:** Results indicated that, overall, general and special education teachers viewed coteaching as a practice that is worth their efforts in the school
- Indicated that students accept both teachers as equal in the learning process.
- Strong level of trust among teachers and that coteachers are able to release some control and responsibility.
- Indicated that teachers are still learning how to effectively balance their instructional strategies while sharing strategies that meet the unique needs of students.



Focus Group

- *“I perceive coteaching as a marriage. It is important that a substantial amount of time must be shared and trust must be established to ensure that the act of coteaching is a beautiful dance”.*
- Lack of collaboration
- The need for additional professional development
- Limited support from administration



Results

- **Question 2:** Results suggested that general education teachers have the expertise required to effectively teach the curriculum.
- Data suggested that participants felt confident that they had the tools required to execute components of the curriculum.



Focus Group

- *“Parallel teaching helps to strengthen my comfort and ability to deliver instruction in a co-teach setting. It requires me to collaborate with my general education teacher to ensure that we have a clear understanding of the curriculum. During parallel teaching, we split the classroom and teach the same information at the same time. However, it is imperative that we are on the same page with delivering instruction. You have to be comfortable and knowledgeable in delivering instruction because if you are not, it becomes evident in student performance”.*



Results

- **Question 3:** Coteaching has encouraged the general and special education teachers to use new teaching methodologies in the classroom.
- Results indicated that coteachers are able to effectively switch instructional strategies when necessary.



Results

- **Question 4:** Coteachers strategically set aside a time to communicate and plan for instruction.



Focus Group

-

“Administrators are not respectful of the time that we carve out to plan for instruction. We are always meeting about another meeting or discussing upcoming meetings. My students suffer because our planning periods are not taken seriously nor respected. It makes me feel defeated and discouraged in the area of planning.”



Results

- **Question 5:** Indicated that uninterrupted team meetings are necessary to improve delivery of instruction for coteachers
- Teacher Editions for each educator
- Professional development trainings that help individuals understand various coteaching models
- Shared planning period



Findings

- Individuals under 36 years old held more positive perceptions toward inclusive settings than educators in any other age bracket for the study
- The findings supported the theory that participants who were confident and had proper training were found to have more positive perceptions about inclusion in an educator's classroom
- In addition, a more positive perception toward inclusion was also exhibited by educators who received course work in teaching students that have a disability.

According to Cook (2004), the perceptions and beliefs of general education teachers about instructing students with disabilities are learned and appear to be impacted by the level of knowledge they have with regard to a particular individual or group



Primary Conclusions

- Teachers believe that coteaching is of value. Teacher perceptions and views would be positively impacted by incorporating uninterrupted collaborative planning periods.
- Teacher perceptions and views would be positively impacted by ensuring that administrative support is present to support coteaching environments.
- The most valuable tool that can be used to positively impact teacher perceptions and views is to ensure that general and special-education teachers receive regular professional development.



Recommendations for Future Research

- Future research should be conducted that investigates the amount and quality of professional development that general and special-education teachers are receiving in the designated area.
- Additional research should be conducted to monitor the actual amount of time that general and special-education teachers spend collaborating to ensure the success of students with disabilities.
- Future research is needed to test whether teacher perceptions of inclusion differ with larger samples or with samples that represent suburban, rural, or urban communities. This research should be ongoing and continual as perceptions change over time.
- Additional research is needed on the relationship between the level of education attained and a teacher's perceptions of inclusion. It would be beneficial to take the information gleaned from the current study to research teacher-preparation programs as well as the courses that are taken related to students with disabilities.



The concept of inclusion calls upon special and general education teachers to share responsibility for the provision of instruction to students with disabilities (Field, 2010).



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